

6/08/2009 This Week in Congress

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June 8, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I posted a new poll on my Web site this week that asks Kansans whether or not they approve of the federal government owning 60 percent of General Motors. I encourage you to let your voice be heard by registering your opinion in the poll. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Hosting Health Care Reform Roundtable Discussion

On Monday, I was in Topeka to host a Health Care Reform Roundtable at Washburn University. The purpose of the event was for me to sit down with Kansas health care professionals, business leaders, academics and patient advocacy groups to visit with them and hear their concerns and proposed solutions to health care reform. I was glad to have more than 50 Kansans representing a wide range of health care organizations participate in the roundtable discussion.

We stand at an important juncture in our health care system and most people agree that our current health care system is broken and unsustainable. Debate on health care reform legislation is beginning in Congress as Democratic congressional leaders and President Obama recently vowed to pass a comprehensive overhaul of the health care

system before August. In order to fix our system, we must reach agreement about the best way to reduce underlying health care costs. A lot is being said about health care in Washington and I want to hear what Kansans think about these important issues.

Topics we talked about during the roundtable included the current health care reform debate in Congress, the need to expand access to health coverage to Kansans, implementing electronic health records and other medical technology, ways to preserve and increase health care quality, reducing and controlling health care costs and investing in disease prevention and wellness. We also discussed how to address the increasing health care needs of the aging Baby Boom generation. Thank you to those who participated in the discussion.

Attending 65th D-Day Anniversary National Commemoration

On Saturday, I attended the 65th D-Day Anniversary National Commemoration at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene. It is important to recognize the anniversary of this historic day during World War II and to pay tribute to the efforts of the many heroic soldiers who courageously fought and gave their lives. On D-Day, it is also appropriate to honor President Dwight Eisenhower as he was the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, and the man most responsible for the planning and execution of the D-Day invasion.

I was honored to participate in this event that was widely attended by military veterans and active duty service members. Thank you to Stewart Etherington, President of the Eisenhower Foundation; Karl Weissenbach, Director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum; Rocco Siciliano, Chairman of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission; and Col. David Griffith, Director of the U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute Program. Also thank you to Linda Smith for inviting me to attend.

Currently, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission is raising money to establish a permanent national memorial

in Washington, D.C., to forever honor President Eisenhower. This will be the first presidential memorial constructed in the 21st Century, and only the seventh presidential memorial ever built. As a member of the Commission, I am grateful to be a part of an effort that will officially celebrate the life and contributions that this Kansan made as one of our nation's greatest leaders. [Click here to read my recent editorial about President Eisenhower.](#) Additionally, [click here to watch my speech to the House of Representatives on President Eisenhower and the 65th D-Day Anniversary.](#)

Sponsoring Legislation to Support Military Children

This week, I sponsored legislation to support military children who are affected in their schools by Department of Defense (DoD) restructuring. HR 2593, the Military Children's School Investment Act, will establish a discretionary grant program through the Department of Education. A number of school districts are experiencing increased enrollments due to growth at Ft Riley, including: Abilene- USD 435; Blue Valley/Randolph- USD 384; Centre- USD 397; Chapman- USD 473; Clay County- USD 379; Geary County- USD 475; Herington- USD 487; Manhattan- USD 383; Mill Creek- USD 329; Morris County- USD 417; Riley County- USD 378; Rock Creek- USD 323; Rural Vista- USD 481; Salina- USD 305; Solomon- USD 393; Topeka- USD 501; and Wamego- USD 320.

This legislation helps fund the construction, modernization and repair of public kindergarten, elementary and secondary education facilities affected by DoD restructuring activities. It will benefit military students and children of civilian employees and will be especially beneficial for school districts near military bases. Now more than ever, we need to support military families as more service men and women are affected by DoD restructuring.

Attending Agriculture Subcommittee Hearing

On Thursday, I attended a hearing held by the Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management to review the ongoing effects of a federal court case involving fraud in the retail foreign currency exchange

(forex) markets called CFTC v. Zelener. The federal court's decision in this case prevented the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) from pursuing enforcement actions against fraudulent traders in the retail forex markets. In the 2008 Farm Bill, the Agriculture Committee, which has jurisdiction over CFTC, included a provision to restore CFTC jurisdiction in the retail forex area. This hearing was to review whether the retail forex fix in the 2008 Farm Bill was working and to determine if fraud similar to that in the retail forex markets was spreading to other commodity markets and might require additional legislation.

Attending Lenexa Rotary Club Meeting

As a member of the Hays Rotary Club, I enjoy visiting other Rotary clubs across the state to visit with members about issues important to their community. On Friday, I attended a meeting of the Lenexa Rotary Club to learn about specific issues of concern to folks in Lenexa. Whether it is Kansans in Johnson County or Johnson City, we all care about the places we call home and want to see them grow and succeed. Civic clubs, such as Rotary, provide valuable leadership in helping making our communities better. While at the meeting, I was able to visit with former state legislators Gene Amos and Frank Weimer, who I served with in the Kansas Legislature before being elected to Congress. Former Representative David Huff is also a member of the club. Thanks to Creighton Hill, Lenexa Rotary Club President, and all of the members of the Lenexa Rotary Club for the warm welcome.

Learning about Health Care Challenges in Fort Scott

On Friday, I visited Mercy Health Center in Fort Scott. Mercy Health System of Kansas operates this hospital, as well as one in Independence. As Congress prepares to consider legislation to reform health care in our country, I want to make sure I understand the unique health care challenges faced across Kansas. I have visited each of the 75 hospitals in the First Congressional District and know that health care delivery differs from place to place. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about Mercy Health Center.

During my visit, I discussed my recent sponsorship of The Critical Access Hospitals (CAH) Designation Waiver Authority Act of 2009, to provide much needed support for Kansas Critical Access Hospitals. The legislation will restore Kansas' ability to waive the mileage requirement for CAH designation and allow states to decide which hospitals warrant the critical access status and enhanced Medicare reimbursement. Another item discussed was the possibility of Kansas hospitals participating in the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Project. The purpose of this federal project is to test the advisability and feasibility of establishing rural community hospitals to provide Medicare covered inpatient hospital services in rural areas.

Thanks to Karen Endicott-Coyan for inviting me to visit and Terri Del Chiaro, Chief Financial Officer; Eric Ammons, Vice President of Human Resources and Customer Service; Kathryn Abbey, Vice President of Mission; and Anna Marie Katosh, Director of Integrated Physicians. [Click here](#) to learn about my health care priorities.

Meeting Business and Community Leaders in Pittsburg

I joined business and community leaders in Pittsburg Friday evening for the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet. I visited with folks about the growing national debt and the increasing role of government in private business. It is more important than ever in these difficult economic times that businesses are allowed to grow and create jobs. Government intrusion into private business threatens our prosperity and hope for a sustained economic recovery. Special thanks to Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board, Steve Beykirch; Blake Benson; Pittsburg State University President, Dr. Tom Bryant; and the Chamber Foundation Board of Directors.

New Videos on YouTube

I have uploaded two new videos to my YouTube page. [Click here](#) to view my most recent remarks on my opposition to

General Motors and Chrysler closing community automobile dealerships. [Click here](#) to view my speech recognizing the 65th Anniversary of D-Day and honoring President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In the Office

Butch Eaton, Jim Lausman and Karla Werth of Topeka and Harry Baum and Angela Moore of Shawnee, with the Kansas Healthcare Association, came into the office to discuss support for seniors in Kansas nursing homes. Maria Arteaga of Garden City and Teresa Molina, Joanna Duran, Sulma Arias, Kristian Guzman and Emira Palacios of Wichita were in with Sunflower Community Action to talk about proposals to reform the immigration system. Galen, Linda and Luke Craghead of Alma stopped by my office to visit. Their son, Levi, served as a page for the House of Representatives this semester.

Kevin Thielen of Manhattan, with the Kansas Livestock Association, stopped by the office to discuss issues affecting the beef industry. Bret Healy of Topeka was in with Pixius Communications to share his thoughts about stimulus projects and the expansion of broadband in Kansas. Terry Leatherman of Lawrence came in with Community in Schools of Kansas to discuss serving at-risk youth and helping students stay in school. Andy Allison of Topeka and Barb Langner of Shawnee were in with the Kansas Health Policy Authority to talk about funding and administration of Medicaid services in Kansas.

Vira Dobbins of Kansas City was in with the Laborers' International Union of North America to visit with me about dual status positions in the National Guard. Debra Diane Hahn of Wichita, with the Kansas Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity, stopped by to discuss the implementation of electronic health record technology in health care reform. Chris Tilden of Topeka, with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Office of Local and Rural Health, visited the office to talk about support for community level emergency medical care systems and other rural health care issues.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a Capitol tour, including Armond, Cindy and

Christian Bechard of Topeka; John and Nadine Dugan of Plainville; Dyrk and Kris Dugan and Arnold and Connie Zissman of Overland Park; Wayne and Lorri Johnson, Rick and Irene Barkman and George Osborne of Hutchinson; Harve and Lori Johnson of Lenexa. Also in for a tour were Mike, Debbie and Pat Bennett and Monica Haug of Seneca; Greg, Teresa, Tyler, Matthew and Rebecca Konda of Lyons; Joshua and Ofelia Schepers of Salina; John, Beverly, Megan and Jessica Hilbish of Emporia; and Andrew, Lesli, Austin and Alex Clark and Wayne and Lori Augustine of Glen Elder.

Very truly yours,

Jerry